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Enquiries regarding subscriptions to Denise@ibts.eu

Enquiries regarding articles to Journal@ibts.eu

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Editorial

This Journal has always prided itself on a wide remit and on encouraging reflection on the history, theology and mission of baptistic communities within the region of the European Baptist Federation. This edition of the Journal demonstrates this three-fold concern.

Branko Bjelajac, a noted authority on evangelical life in Serbia, helps us remember that though we have recently celebrated *Amsterdam 400*, the history of Christians within the baptistic tradition does not start de nouveau in a bakehouse in Amsterdam but, as Ian Randall has demonstrated in his key book *Communities of Conviction*, the people we now call 'Baptist' have numerous different points of departure within the Christian story. There is a pre-history which is truly *our* history and though we want to avoid the notions of classic Baptist 'successionism', we do well to remember movements of renewal which precede Smythe and Helwys. So here we learn of contacts in the Balkans by the followers of Peter Waldo, Jan Hus, Hutterites, Unitarians and various early evangelicals who were active in the region.

Alec Gilmore reflects on the Norwegian author Henrick Ibsen (1828-1906) and searches for resonances with the gospel in his writings. Though Ibsen was not formally a Christian, he had much of the 'Christian spirit within him', and Gilmore looks for important theological themes within his writings, concentrating on characters such as Brand, Bernick, Captain Alving, Stockman, Rosmersholm and Ellida. Gilmore explores the question Ibsen struggled with, as do we. What happens when different cultures collide, where the pursuit of ideals comes up against the dead hand of lifeless dogma?

Joyce De Ridder takes us to applied theology and the practice of ministry in contemporary Europe. Dr De Ridder, and her colleague Joe Ann Shelton, have given over a decade of service to Slovakian Baptists helping to develop ministries with those with alcohol and drug dependence issues in central and eastern Slovakia. They have left a legacy of continuing missional work by Slovak Baptists. Dr De Ridder, an acknowledged expert, helps us reflect on how the churches might engage critically in this key area of life in society.

The Revd Dr Keith G Jones
Rector, IBTS

Echoes of the Early Reformation in Serbia

Branko Bjelajac

The popularly accepted notion is that the religious movements that sprang up from the Reformation only arrived in Serbia in the nineteenth century, alongside the work of the British and Foreign Bible Society¹ and the publication of the New Testament in Serbian in 1848. However, historical and literary sources and travellers' accounts suggest otherwise. From the twelfth century onwards, the territory of modern Serbia had contact with the Waldensians, Bogumils, Hussites and Hutterites, while Lutherans, Calvinists/Reformers, Unitarians, Sabbatarians, Anabaptists, and others appeared somewhat later.²

Waldensians

From existing sources it is possible to establish that the followers of Peter Waldo – the Waldensian movement that spread from Milan, Italy – sent missionaries to visit the scattered 'Evangelical' churches (movements) in the period after 1220. The Waldensian missionaries also travelled the Balkans.³

Apart from the countries of Western Europe, these missionaries visited the Kingdom of Hungary, Bulgaria, Turkey and other countries. Catholic historians, who speak particularly negatively of the Waldensians, state that they found their churches and followers, among other places, in Constantinople, as well as in Slavonia, Croatia and Dalmatia.

Contacts with Hussitism

As Dr Dragutin Prohaska says, there are indications that in the sixteenth century the Hussites and Taborites joined forces with the Bogumils from Bosnia in warring against the Catholics. But even more interesting is his discussion of the appearance of Hussites in Srem and the 'surrounding areas of Bosnia and Rascia'.

According to historical sources, there were no less than three students from Ilok studying at Prague University between 1401 and 1420, of whom Valentin and Tomas of Ilok are mentioned as being Hussites and

¹ For a history of the British and Foreign Bible Society see www.biblesociety.org.uk/history, accessed 1st December 2009.

² See Aleksandar Birviš, 'Tu smo negde bili i mi [We were there somewhere, too], editorial, Branko Bjelajac, *Protestantizam u Srbiji 2* (Belgrade: Alfa i Omega, 2005).

³ See Mirko Golubić, *Istorija crkve* [History of the Church], course notes, Belgrade. 1973, p. 183.

the first translators of the Scriptures into Hungarian. Students from the region who studied in Prague later became proponents of the Hussite movement in Srem. Among them were Benedict (studied 1413), Andreja from Ilok (1410), as well as Jakov and Valentin (1411), Nikola from Slankamen (1409 and 1412) and Jakov (1418). Đorđe Radojičić believes that Valentin from Ilok probably became a priest in Beočin and that he is probably the *literatus*, the writer who in 1437 fled from the Inquisition to Moldavia and there, together with Toma from Sremska Kamenica translated the Scriptures into the Hungarian vernacular.⁴

Dr Šidak mentions a number of settlements in Srem and on the Fruška Gora that were involved in Hussitism. He mentions Kamenica, on the right bank of the Danube, near Petrovaradin, with an ethnic Hungarian population, as well as Bač and Beočin, and St. Martin. It is interesting to note the observation by historians that wherever there were Orthodox believers, Hussitism took root only among Catholic church members.

In 1432 (or 1431), Constantine the Philosopher, writing his 'Life of Despot Stefan Lazarević', conveyed something of the prevailing atmosphere during the peak of the Hussite rebellion, and the role of the Serbian army in crushing it. King Sigmund requested from his vassal a small unit which would help in the battles with the Taborites. In the winter of 1421 and early 1422, this unit invaded the west of the Kingdom of Hungary.⁵

There is insufficient data on an earlier visit by Despot Stefan to Konstanz in 1415 during the trial and burning of Jan Hus, although it is known that somebody was present under his colours and coat-of-arms in King Sigmund's entourage. A citizen carefully sketched the coats-of-arms of all of the dignitaries present at that time in Konstanz (important people would place their shields on the buildings in which they were residing). It has not been established whether the Despot himself was actually in Konstanz, or whether he had sent his representatives, but it is certain that he was allocated a house during the council and that his coat-of-arms was displayed on it.

The organised arrival of the Tavoricians and Hussites in the region probably did not occur until 1437, when a military expedition against the Turks in this part of the world included several companies of Tavoricians in its ranks. Yet there are many sources which speak of existing Hussites in the region as a problem which needed to be solved.

⁴ Đorđe Sp. Radojičić, *Razvojni luk stare srpske književnosti* [The Development Curve of Old Serbian Literature] (Novi Sad: Matica Srpska, 1962), p. 49.

⁵ See *Istoriја srpskог народа* [History of the Serbian People], Book II, Belgrade, SKZ, 1994, p. 209.

Thus, on 15 March 1437, Jakov, bishop of Srem, writes to Pope Eugene IV that the inquisitor Jakov de Marcia has found many heretics ‘perverted by Hussitism’ in the Diocese of Srem and surrounding area. Bishop Jakov goes on to say that the heretics had referred to the Roman Church as a ‘synagogue of Satan’, that they took Communion under both kinds (both bread and wine), that they met at night and that they ‘may’ have wanted to slaughter all of the bishops.⁶ The letter to the Pope came after some initial misunderstandings – Friar Jakov had been prevented from acting in this area since he did not have orders or permission to act there. For this reason, the inquisitor turned to the local bishop and the local elder for permission to act.⁷ A year later, on 18 July 1438, Friar Jakov also received a similar letter from the authorities in Valpovo.

A letter from the ‘comes⁸ of Požeš county’, District Prefect Vladislav, dated 25 February 1437, talks of the areas in which the inquisitor found Hussites, ‘between the rivers Sava and Danube, and in the surrounding areas of Bosnia and Rascia’ and he states that in those regions mostly ‘Rascians, Bosnians and Christians, as well as Hussites [have lived] for many years’.⁹

The 38-article confession of faith of the Hussites, collected by the inquisitor Jakov de Marcia, relates to the Kingdom of Hungary and Srem, and as Prohaska has pointed out actually sets out, in articles 15 and 16, the faith of the Bogumils¹⁰ (dealing as it does with their refusal to make the sign of the cross and the denial of Christ’s real suffering on the cross). The Hussites could not in any sense have accepted the teaching that the body and blood of Christ were merely symbolic since their dogma stated that the Eucharist was Jesus’ real body and blood. Other articles of the confession such as, for example, article 9 – which rejects the notion of Purgatory, and 10 – where the Pope’s right to the power that Jesus conferred on Peter is refuted, etc., are quite similar to the Wycliffites, as well as the Waldensians, but the Bogumils too could easily have confessed such beliefs.

⁶ Katona, *Historia XII*, p. 773.

⁷ St. Stanojević, ‘Bogomili i husiti u Sremu i Bačkoj’ [The Bogumils and the Hussites in Srem and Bačka], *Glasnik istorijskog društva u Novom Sadu*, bk. 1, issue. 1, 1928: pp. 114-5.

⁸ A title equivalent to Count.

⁹ *Istorija srpskog naroda*, p. 319.

¹⁰ ‘Bogumilism was followed by the Bosnian people. The Papal instruction bear witness to this, as well as the striving of the Curia to work on the conversion of the “heretical” and “schismatic” Bosnian population... The Curia sent its most able people to Bosnia. And then when we look at the scope and seriousness of the work and its results, we can see that this policy did not succeed and that it did not give the results expected by the Curia, after the extensively planned work in Bosnia, into which great effort was invested.’ Miodrag Al. Purković, *Avnijonske pape i srpske zemlje* [The Avignon Popes and the Serbian Lands], Požarevac, b.i. 1934, pp. 93-4.

The reports of Jakov of Marcia speak of the widespread presence of Hussites in Vojvodina, that is, in Srem and Bačka. In his report of 1436, he speaks of the Diocese of Kaloča in Bačka and says:

... [Jakov] found many heretics (Hussites), priests and laymen, who were confessing and spreading heresy around the forests, ale-houses and mills, around mountain caves and dens of the earth.¹¹

From Bačka, Jakov moved on to Srem where he requested written support from the Požega district Prefect, Vladislav, where we read,

...that in Srem also there are truly many Orthodox (Rasciani), Bogumils (Boznenses) and Hussites (Huzytae). (Grujić)

However, as Klaić says, all of the efforts of Friar Jakov de Marcia notwithstanding, the Hussites survived both in Srem and across Moldavia, as attested to by reports from the 1460s.

As far as the causes and the rise of Hussitism in Srem are concerned, Dr Šidak, in his article, confirms the words of Ladislav Morovićki, who wrote in 1437 that ‘the primarily Catholic population was adopting Hussite reformist slogans’ and he considers that the Bosnian heretics, the Patarenes had not prepared the ground for the introduction of the new teaching. According to Šidak, Hussitism spread mostly along the whole length of the Danube belt, from Slankamen in the east, via Ilok in the west, ‘through the markets and towns, among merchants, traders and other citizens, most of all in the Hungarian settlements.’¹²

A number of Srem Hussites fled to Moldavia under strong pressure from the Inquisition, but the Franciscans were soon entrusted with the mission against the Hussites there too. Thus the Hussite movement came into contact with Serbs and Orthodox Christians in Vojvodina and was known and observed in these parts.

Momčilo Spremić says that in June 1455 in Györ, Despot Đurađ Branković met the Franciscan monk Giovanni da Capistrano, who came to the Kingdom of Hungary after he had lead the struggle against the Hussites (and the Jews) in Germany, Austria, Poland and Bohemia. Capistrano had decided to unite the forces of Christendom in the struggle against the advancing Turks, and ‘besides that, began to preach the “true faith” in the southern part of the Kingdom of Hungary, populated primarily by “heretics” and “schismatics”.’¹³

¹¹ Rad. M. Grujić, ‘Jedan papski inkvizitor 15 veka u Vojvodini’ [A 15th Century Papal Inquisitor in Vojvodina], *Glasnik istorijskog društva u Novom Sadu*, book 4, issue 3 (Sremski Karlovci, 1931), p. 437.

¹² Jaroslav Šidak, ‘Heretički pokret i odjek husitizma na slavenskom jugu’ [The Heretical Movement and Echoes of Hussitism in the Slavic South], *Zbornik za društvene nauke MS*, issue 31, 1932, pp. 5-23.

¹³ Momčilo Spremić, ‘Despot Đurađ Branković i papska kurija’ [Despot Đurađ Branković and the Papal Curia], *Spomenica Svetozara Radojevića: Zbornik Filozofskog fakulteta*, Book XVI, Belgrade, p. 171.

Points of interest concerning Jovan Nenad

Towards the end of 1526 there appeared in Vojvodina, in eastern Banat in the district of Lipovo, a certain Jovan Nenad (also known as Nenada); a self-proclaimed king who asserted that he was the last Serbian Despot and the successor of the Byzantine emperors. In the vacuum which arose after the defeat of the Hungarians at Mohacs, at the height of the struggle for the Hungarian throne between Jovan Zapolja¹⁴ and the Czech king Ferdinand of Hapsburg, he assembled an army for battle against the Turks. He quickly occupied a large territory, the whole of Bačka and southern Srem, and established Szeged as his headquarters. Of the two great men, Jovan Nenad first turned to Zapolja and then later forged ties with Ferdinand, who promised him the title of Despot and all the Serbian lands in the Kingdom of Hungary. This distanced him from Zapolja, who was probably behind the ambush in Subotica in which he was wounded. Later he was tricked and beheaded on 26 July 1527, even though at the time he had at least 20,000 soldiers.

The people who had rallied to Emperor Jovan saw in him a supernatural being:

They believed blindly in him and carried out his every command without question... (Jovan Nenad) claimed that he was the descendant of the Serbian Despots and that God had entrusted to him the task of punishing the Turks and driving them out of Europe... He was very moral and pious.¹⁵

John Wallop, the English emissary to Ferdinand's court, wrote to Cardinal Wolsey, Lord Chancellor of England, that Jovan Nenad would spend a third of the night in prayer. For each two hours that he slept he would pray for one hour. Whole legends spread concerning his origins. He continually claimed that God had appointed him to convert the pagans and unbelievers to Christianity, and to root out the Muslims and 'other sects'. It is interesting to note that he did not differentiate between Orthodox and Catholic believers, nor between the different nationalities who served him.¹⁶

In her article, Dušanka Dinić-Knežević says that the Serbs 'rushed to him as though to some prophet to whom miracles were ascribed... The various fantastic stories that surrounded him only brought him popularity

¹⁴ Szapolyai is a variant spelling in Hungarian. Also Ivan Zapolje.

¹⁵ *Spomenica na cara Jovana Nenada subotičkog 1527-1927* [In Memory of Emperor Jovan Nenad of Subotica, 1527-1927], Subotica, anniversary celebration committee, 1927, p. 9.

¹⁶ See Dušan Popović, *Srbi u Vojvodini* [The Serbs in Vojvodina], Book 1 (Novi Sad: Matica Srpska, 1990), p. 133.

among the uneducated.¹⁷ Samardžić says that Jovan Nenad proved that he had been sent from God through miracles, prayers, his battle exploits and his prophetic eloquence. It is said that he was strict but just, and merciless towards his enemy.

Jovan did not stop even there with his mystification but went even further. It was not enough for him that God had sent him, he constantly claimed that he was a man of God, whom providence had inspired... and enabled to communicate directly with Him... He publicly claimed that God revealed the future to him and that besides that, he could do miracles, as indeed was widely believed – the very well-informed Sremac wrote of him that, ‘he does miracles with a mere thought’.¹⁸

The whole of Europe, including England, became interested in the significance of Jovan Nenad’s movement. English diplomats in Prague and Budim were obliged to write reports about his activities, and at one point Cardinal Wolsey asked Ferdinand to join with his brother Karl of Austria and together to reach a general ‘Pax Christiana’ after which there would be a great crusade against the advancing Turks of Suleyman the Magnificent. This plan also included a significant role for the army of Jovan Nenad, and so all of the activities of Jovan Nenad, his army, and later the attacks by his enemies, Zapolja’s commanders, were regularly reported to the English court.

It is probable that the source and full extent of the religiosity of this Serbian military leader and its relation to his military achievements, as well as the great fear that it evoked in Jovan Zapolja and Ferdinand of Hapsburg, will never be established, since the spiritual side of his life and his activities as a self-proclaimed Emperor have not been sufficiently researched.

The discussion on Luther in the Serbo-Slavonic language in 1534-5

Gavrilo Svetogorac was a writer in the first half of the sixteenth century, a priest of Mount Athos for three terms and a ‘protosinghel¹⁹ of the Holy Patriarch in Constantinople’. As notary of the Protata Cathedral in Karyes, Gavrilo translated the history of the founding of Mount Athos into Serbian,

¹⁷ Dušanka Dinić-Knežević, ‘Prilog proučavanju pokreta Jovana Nenada’ [A contribution to the study of the movement of Jovan Nenad], *Godišnjak Filozofskog fakulteta u Novom Sadu*, book 7 (1962-1963), pp. 21-29.

¹⁸ Radosav Jovanović, *Pokret pod carem Jovanom ‘Nenadom’ i politički problem postanka Austrije kao velike sile* [The movement under Emperor Jovan ‘Nenad’ and the political problem of the rise of Austria as a great power], (an unpublished doctoral thesis in the SANU [Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts] archive, file no. 9830) (Beograd, 1910), p. 53.

¹⁹ Protosinghel is a priest or a monk who assists the Abbot or Bishop in a monastery.

wrote ‘The Life of Niphus’ and translated two other official books into Serbian: ‘Constitution for Priests in Preparing for the Liturgy’ and ‘On the Liturgy for the Dead in Holy Week’. As well as translating and writing, Gavrilo, along with Latsko of Macesti, logothete of the Hungarian king Jovan Zapolja, maintained a theological correspondence in the Serbo-Slavonic language. ‘In refuting Luther (Luftor), Gavrilo also speaks ill of the Catholic church.’²⁰

Of the two letters to Gavrilo and his two extant replies, only the last letter with questions and a letter with responses missing its end have been preserved. A transcription of these letters in Serbian was published in the journal ‘Bogoslovlje’ (*Theology*) in 1934. Both letters were burned in the bombing of the Serbian National Library in Belgrade on 6 April 1941.

Lacko, the logothete of the Hungarian king Jovan Zapolja, wrote to Gavrilo a second time in the name of his king in 1534, stating that Gavrilo’s first letter – ‘Instruction from Holy Scripture’ – was being kept in the King’s treasury. In the introduction to the letter, it says that Gavrilo is asked to answer, ‘on the basis of Holy Scripture’ regarding certain points of Luther’s teaching and faith. Then Lacko asks Gavrilo to reply to the question of where the souls of ‘the Orthodox’ go after death, and what he thinks of the unification of the Orthodox and Catholic churches. The impression we gain is that Lacko was an Orthodox believer seeking assistance and interpretation from an older one. On Luther he writes the following:

And then may it be known to Your Holiness that here in the Kingdoms of Hungary and Germany, and everywhere among Christians who adhere to the Roman Pope, there are many heresies and false prophets. Some preach that neither fasting, nor confession, nor liturgy are necessary, nor should one pray to any of the saints, nor to the prophets, nor to the Apostles, nor to the martyrs, nor to the Most Pure Mother of God, but only to the One God; even if they be saints, yet they cannot intercede before God. And thus confess their priests, so that they might marry as do ours. This is all taught by a prophet named Luther. He has conquered the land of Germany, and their priests all marry, and here in the Kingdom of Hungary many have joined him and accepted his teaching.²¹

As Sima Đirković says, what is surprising here is Zapolja’s intention, in relation to the discussion on the unification of the churches, to obtain permission from the Sultan to allow the ‘Eastern patriarchs’ to attend a council in his country.

²⁰ Đorđe Sp. Radojičić, ‘Gavrilo Svetogorac’, *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije III tom* [The Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia, Volume 3] (Zagreb, Leksikografski zavod FNRJ, 1958), p. 432.

²¹ Ibid., p. 432 ff.

The ‘humble priest’ Gavrilo, in his reply to the logothete, offers his view, as well as a fierce criticism of Luther’s teaching, and replies in detail regarding relations with the ‘Roman church’, but completely omits any reply to the questions about the Orthodox. It is possible that Gavrilo’s motives lay in his intention to bring the Orthodox Church as close as possible to the King and make it appealing to him, and he therefore describes the Catholics as no good at all and Luther even less so.

...and that there is also among you a philosopher by the name of Luther (Luftor in the original), and he errs in his teaching... And we say to him: that he is in no wise a Christian, but rather a devilish Jew and a Turk by faith and is far from the holy Orthodox faith.²²

In support of his position, Gavrilo then spoke about the Old Testament examples of fasting and prayer and added to this the issue of confession, extending the debate to the 69th Apostolic Canon on fasting and going on to build his response on church tradition and the Holy Fathers.

Have you not, O cursed Luther, together with those who follow your teachings, read or heard of the lives of the Holy Fathers or the holy martyrs who spilled their blood for Christ our God?²³

Finishing his discussion of Luther, Gavrilo warns that fiendish and unbelieving souls ‘walk with the Devils to Christ’s judgement, possessed by them’ and that the heretics will approach the Lord from his left hand side where the infidels and heretics will receive damnation and ‘the fiery torment prepared [for them]’.²⁴

Mihael Radašin

In occupied southern Hungary in the mid-sixteenth century, there was a theological struggle for supremacy between the Evangelicals (Lutherans) and Sacramentarians (as the Calvinists were then known). In this struggle one of the most significant Lutheran preachers was Mihael Radašin, probably a Croat, who studied in Wittenberg and served as city pastor in Hainburg, only twenty kilometres from Pressburg (Bratislava), and who hoped that in 1540 he would be appointed in Banska Bistrica, even though a few years earlier he had turned down an invitation from this city. In 1546, Radašin became the evangelical senior of all the King’s free towns in north-eastern Hungary.

The well-known generalisation that the Turks were tolerant towards Protestantism in this period is lent further credence by an episode (spoken

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

of by the Hungarian historian Revesz) when the local Turkish pasha ordered some Franciscans to hold a debate with the reformists in his presence.

Preachers and teachers were given approval to freely move to Turkish areas, as well as to freely preach without hindrance. Gal Huszar writes to Bullinger in 1557: ‘... there is no obstacle to spreading the Gospel under the Turks; indeed as people they are interested in its spread. It is not uncommon for a group of Turks to come to church to hear the sermon and then to quietly leave before we celebrate the Lord’s Supper.’ However, there were no real results from this sporadic interest which, it seems was only curiosity after all. Only one convert among them is known of...²⁵

Count Petar Petrović²⁶

In 1557, an assembly was held in Torda where the disputing factions presented themselves in the best possible light before Empress Isabella in order to gain legal backing for their theological standpoint. There is a positive note and a certain religious liberty apparent in the concluding document of this council, though this was short-lived. Of particular interest to us are the earlier activities of the Calvinist leader Martin of Kalmancseh, who enjoyed the protection of the king’s palatine for Transylvania and his assistant Count Petar Petrović, governor of Erdelj, a noble and landowner from eastern Hungary. Kalmancseh worked from Debrecen.

A dialogue between the two reform camps (Lutherans and Calvinists) was held in Hungary as early as 1551, when Count Petrović was just a rich landowner from the east of the country, but he never ceased to support Kalmancseh. In 1558, Kalmancseh succeeded through his great influence, in persuading the whole of Transylvania (Erdelj), with the exception of the Saxon Lutherans, to accept the Helvetic (Reformist) doctrine of the Lord’s Supper, even though Petrović no longer occupied the position he had held before.

²⁵ Imre Revesz, *History of the Hungarian Reformed Church*, transl. by George A.F. Knight, Hungarica Americana 5 (Washington, D.C.: The Hungarian Reformed Federation of America, 1956), p. 22.

²⁶ Some rare sources mention the Serbian noble family Jakšić, which received estates in the Kluška parish and in Erdelj, as protectors of the Protestants in their struggle against the Hungarian Catholic nobility.

‘All evidence points to the fact that these newcomers from Serbia initially found it hard to become accustomed to the rule of law and the customs of the Hungarian *nemeš*, organised into autonomous parishes. Thus in the early years, after the arrival of the Jakšić family in the Kingdom of Hungary, there were frequent reports of conflicts and clashes with Hungarian nobles, towards whom the Jakšić’s showed themselves unusually bold and decisive. However, by the time of the second generation of the Jakšić family, they had become accustomed to the circumstances and order in the Kingdom of Hungary, and identified their interests with the interests of the Hungarian nobles.’ See in Jovan Radonić, ‘Prilozi za istoriju braće Jakšića’ [Contributions to a History of the Brothers Jakšić], *Spomenik Srpske kraljevske akademije*, LIX, drugi razred, no 50 (Belgrade, 1923).

The historical records say of Count Petrović that he was a great friend of the Reformation. In 1554 he took over the function of Protector of Transylvania on behalf of Zapolja's younger son. Since he held ultimate authority, he ensured that preachers were able to freely propagate the Reformation.

Petrović removed all images from the churches, turned monasteries into schools, removed papal priests from the parishes, minted silver and gold coins with the image of a cup,²⁷ confiscated the property of the Catholic Church in the name of the state and ensured that three quarters of the revenue went towards the wages of Protestant priests. Thus it was that, with the approval and cooperation of all the people, who had been liberated from the jurisdiction of the Roman hierarchy, the large majority of the population throughout Transylvania converted to the Protestant faith.²⁸

Count Petar Petrović first appeared on the historical scene after the death of Jovan Nenad, on the side of Jovan Zapolja, with whom he had familial ties. In 1556, using Serbian troops, but also Turkish border vassals, he attacked the units of Emperor Ferdinand and succeeded in returning Queen Isabella to power. Petrović died in October 1557 and was replaced by Stefan Losonesy, who banished many preachers including Stefan Kis, Petrović's great friend, from Szeged, as well as Kis' colleagues.

Dwornik speaks of the influence of another Serb in the region, Demeterius (Dimitrije),²⁹ who was a secretary of the Duke of Wallachia, and who also served in Byzantium. After his visit to Melanchthon in 1559 he translated *Confession Augustana*;³⁰ Demeterius also helped John Heraklides when he invaded Moldavia in 1561 and started to introduce the Reformation, but all failed when the local Orthodox population revolted and killed Heraklides in 1563.

The influence of Protestantism in Erdelj was felt as much as a century later. The Serbian Metropolitan of Erdelj, Sava II (Branković), as is recorded 'resisted Calvinist proselytism most energetically', and because of this struggle ended up in prison in 1680 and, although he was quickly released, died the next year.

²⁷ The symbol of the cup featured on the flags of the Hussites and the Tavoricians in their battles with the Catholic armies. The cup represented the taking of Communion under both aspects.

²⁸ J.A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, volume III (London, Paris & New York: Cassell Petter & Galpin, 1877), p. 227.

²⁹ Some sources believe he was Montenegrin by origin.

³⁰ Francis Dwornik, *The Slavs in European History and Civilization* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1962), pp. 428-429.

The Hutterites

The great historian of the radical reformation, George Williams, in his work *The Radical Reformation*,³¹ speaks of the possibility that exiled Anabaptists – Hutterites from Italy, fleeing to Moravia – also had to pass through Slavic Slovenia and Croatia. He believes that these movements can be connected with the so-called *skakalci* (jumpers), and with the peasant movement of Matija Gubec, although there is insufficient data to confirm this.

The Hutterite Chronicles record that in 1540 captured Hutterites were sent from Vienna, via Maribor, Celje and Kamnik, then along the Sava to Ljubljana, then from there to Trieste, where they were loaded onto boats to serve as galley-slaves. In 1562 other Hutterites were held in prisons in Koper and sent from there to Venice where they were executed.

It is recorded that in 1588, at the invitation of the local noble, a group of Hutterites migrated to Croatia, from the region of Alvinc in Transsylvania, where they had initially settled. It is very likely that on their travels they crossed the plains of Vojvodina.³²

In the autumn of 1622, three ‘servants of the Word’, as the Hutterite preachers were then known, emigrated from Transsylvania, together with their congregations. Some of them went to Croatia, but the majority moved to the south-east of the Kingdom of Hungary.

A small group, together with a servant of the Word was sent to Croatia, in response to a request by Master Batanyi and offers of good conditions. They were given the opportunity to serve him for a good wage as cellar-keepers, warehousemen, foremen, farm supervisors, gardeners, millers, carpenters and barber-surgeons.³³

Hutterites, together with Slavic refugees fleeing before the Turks, settled in the part of Austria now called Burgenland, then known as Transdanubia. The Slavs who settled there were known as Krovoten, or Krabaten (probably Croats). Since the Hutterites had regular services in this region right up to 1635, it is very likely that Croats from Krabatenland occasionally joined this movement. One Hungarian scholar discovered three place-names in the Hutterite Chronicles which had wrongly been placed in Slovakia, when in fact they were villages in Transdanubia: Kreuz, Freischutz and Gata. Many authors agree that Central Europe and the

³¹ G.H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), p. 577.

³² John Horsch, *Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History: The Hutterian Brethren 1528-1931, A Story of Martyrdom and Loyalty* (Goshen, IN: The Mennonite Historical Society, 1931), p. 63.

³³ *The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren*, volume I (Rifton, NY: Plough Publishing House, n.d.), p. 676.

Balkans had a more significant role in the development of Anabaptism than was previously believed.³⁴

Unitarians³⁵

The Unitarian movement appeared in the southern part of the Kingdom of Hungary in the mid-sixteenth century, and one of the first to work on the propagation of this movement was Stephen Basilus, whose base was, for a time, in the city of Pecs. The movement was so strong that it had already become the practice in those villages where the pastor was a Unitarian to appoint a Calvinist as teacher, and vice versa. Encouraged by the strengthening of the movement in Poland, the Unitarians founded churches both in Timisoara and in Kolosvar in Transylvania, but the plague of 1628 and the later rule of Emperor Leopold, who brought the Jesuits to these regions, caused the disappearance of the Unitarians in Vojvodina in the middle of that century. Not long before that, because of the appearance of Sabbatarianism, a synod was held in 1618 at which every Unitarian church had to state its opinion on that issue. Because of the great persecution of the Sabbatarians, Unitarian churches even crossed over to Calvinism in order to save themselves, and this too contributed to the disappearance of the Unitarians. The Sabbatarians appeared again around 1620 in Transylvania, when their main leader was Simon Pesci. In 1638 almost a thousand Sabbatarians were condemned to death and to confiscation of their property if they refused to recant their beliefs and join one of the recognised confessions, and so the Unitarians and Sabbatarians split and distanced themselves one from another after this event, even though the Unitarians too lost churches and schools, mostly thanks to the Reformers, who fought them vigorously.

Even after this event, the Sabbatarians survived in the Kingdom of Hungary, albeit in secret, and remained hidden right up to 1867 when the Hungarian government passed regulations concerning the recognition of the

³⁴ Robert Friedmann, *Hutterite Studies* (Goshen, IN: Mennonite Historical Society, 1961), pp. 64-65.

³⁵ Earl Morse Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism: In Transylvania, England and America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), pp. 84-85. Unitarians traditionally believed in the 'oneness' of God as opposed to a belief in the Trinity. The most significant theologian of this movement, the Spaniard Servetus, was burned at the stake in Geneva in 1604. The Unitarian movement is identified with the Arian heresy from the early church period and was viciously persecuted by both Catholics and Protestants. The centre of this Anti-Trinitarian movement in the Middle Ages was in the town of Rakov, near Krakow, where after 1565 they founded their own university and printing press, led by Italian Socinus (Fausto Sozzini). The Unitarians, at the beginning of the 20th century in the Kingdom of Hungary, had 160 churches and around 75,000 followers. The findings of Rudolf Horvat from Srem speak of the individual towns where Unitarians were reported in the census of 1930: Erdevik, Batrovci, Bačinci, Ilinci, Kukujevci, Neštin, Sot, Privina glava, Trgovište, Šid. For more on this see: Rudolf Horvat, *Srijem, naselja i stanovništvo* [Srem: its Settlements and Population], Hrvatski institut za povijest, podružnica za povijest Srijema, Slavonije i Baranje, Slavonski brod.

Jewish faith and the emancipation of the Jews. At that time, a group of 136 people crossed over from the Reformed and Catholic church to Judaism – clearly Sabbatarians who had been in hiding among other confessions. However, by 1893 there was no trace of the Sabbatarians in the southern part of the Kingdom of Hungary (Vojvodina), and scholars believe that by then all those who did not convert to Judaism had died out.

Catholic visitations and reports

On the order of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, Catholic missionaries, led by the Jesuit Bartol Kašić, toured southern Vojvodina, Srem and Turkish-occupied central Serbia.

The missionaries moved further towards the Drava and Baranja. They visited Calvinist settlements and had great trouble with this branch of Protestantism. Defiant and insolent, the Calvinists, with the help of the Turks, strove to hinder the work of the Catholic missionaries. This can be seen from a later report from Don Šimun Matković, who even though he spoke good Turkish only just managed to thwart the intentions of the Calvinists with much trouble and generous gifts (Arh. S. Congr. Scripta Varia. Decreta S. Congr. 162, pp. 183-185).³⁶

In his report on the position of Catholics in this region in 1617, the Jesuit Marin de Bonis Dobrojević writes of the heavy pressure exerted by the Turks on the Catholics, who were surrounded by heretics, Arians, Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists and other schismatics. He also says that, in the absence of Catholic priests, Catholics would bring their children to be baptised by Protestant and Orthodox priests.

The Papal Visitor Petar Masarek³⁷ sent a report in 1623 on his travels around the Balkans in which he noted the significant presence of Protestants in this region. Thus he says that in the southern part of the Kingdom of Hungary, apart from the Serbian-speaking Orthodox, there were Calvinists, Lutherans and Sabbatarians.

Masarek informs the Congregation that in the Drava Valley areas of Slavonia Filip, a former Franciscan was successfully at work, having cast off the cassock of his order, married and begun to spread the Calvinist doctrine. There is an interesting comment, that he was assisted in this work

³⁶ Jovan Radonić, *Rimska kurija i južnoslovenske zemlje od XVI do XIX veka* [The Roman Curia and the Southern Slavic Lands from the 16th to the 19th Century] (Beograd: Srpska akademija nauka [Serbian Academy of Sciences], Social Sciences Department, Belgrade, 1950), p. 16.

³⁷ Krunoslav Draganović, 'Izvješće apostolskog vizitatora Petra Masarechija o prilikama katol. naroda u Bugarskoj, Srbiji, Srijemu, Slavoniji i Bosni g. 1623. i 1624'. [The report of the Apostolic Visitor Petar Masarechi regarding the circumstances of Catholic peoples in Bulgaria, Serbia, Srem, Slavonia and Bosnia in 1623 and 1624], *Starine XXXIX* (1938) (Zagreb: JAZU), pp. 1-48.

by a certain Dorđe Petrović, *licenciat* (Master of Theology) who was very active in St. Martin's (Smiciklas). In the Drava Valley, there were another twenty 'Illyric villages' of the Calvinist faith. In the town of Tolna, on the Danube, there were Calvinist Hungarians, as well as Serbs, as in Mohacs, where there were schismatic Rasci, Calvinists and Šokci. In the region around Baranjavar, Serbs lived alongside Turks, and in Darda schismatic Serbs lived alongside Calvinists.

Some data about Protestantism in Serbia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

There are few documents and material dating from before the eighteenth century which mention Protestantism in the area of present day Serbia. The German chronicler von Taube gives us some clues. He writes that from 1557, Protestants crossed from Hungary (and Vojvodina) into Slavonia and gained so many supporters 'that Reformed parishes numbered several hundred in the 17th century. But they disappeared again, apart from three Reformed villages surrounding Osek (today's Osijek in Croatia).'³⁸ The reasons for the crossing of Protestants into Slavonia can probably be found in the Turkish conquest of Vojvodina in the period between 1540 and 1560.³⁹

The well-known Protestant preacher Mihail Starin (or Staranin, a Slovak in origin), who gained his theological schooling with Melanchthon in around 1530 and then returned to Slavonia, wrote the following to one of his contemporaries in 1551: 'I took the teaching of the Gospel to both banks of the Drava and Danube where, with the help of the brothers and the Holy Spirit, I founded 120 parishes'.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, in 1551, the reformer Szegedi Kis István founded the oldest reformist community in Zrenjanin, which it is said was destroyed with the coming of the Turks.⁴¹

Vladimir Đorović, in his *Istorija Srba* (History of the Serbs) comments that the Protestant movement did not, however, take root in the

³⁸ Friedrich Wilhelm von Taube, *Istoriski i geografski opis kraljevine Slavonije i vojvodstva Srema kako s obzirom na njihove prirodne osobine tako i na sadašnje ustrojstvo i novo uređenje u crkvenim, građanskim i vojnim stvarima* [A historical and geographic description of the Kingdom of Slavonia and the Dukedom of Srem, both with regard to their natural characteristics and their current ecclesiastic, civil and military affairs] (Novi Sad: Izdavačko preduzeće Matice Srpske, 1998) (reprint from 1777), p. 59.

³⁹ Stanko Jambrek, *Hrvatski protestantski pokret XVI i XVII stoljeća* [The Croatian Protestant Movement of the 16th and 17th Centuries] (Zaprešić: Matica Hrvatska Zaprešić, 1999), p. 102.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 109.

⁴¹ Karl Sterlemann, *Studien zur Kirchengeschichte der Reformierten Christlichen Kirche in Jugoslawien, Kroatien und Sudungarn (von der Ansiedlungszeit bis 1944)* (Winnenden/Württemberg: Eigenverlag des Verfassers, 1988), p. 38.

areas densely populated by Serbs. 'But among the people, the term *Lutor* [Luther] came to denote a terrible heathen...'⁴²

Nikola F. Pavković, speaking of the Turkish conquests and of religious changes in the population says:

...And the Christians themselves were always in conflict amongst themselves: the Franciscans against the Calvinists and Lutherans, whom the Turks favoured. In fact the Calvinists and Lutherans were persecuted more by the Catholic Church than by the Muslims. The spread of Protestantism, especially in Banat, was helped even by the Turks, as well as by certain of the Hungarian nobility who were opposed to the Hapsburg monarchy.⁴³

Other sources also talk of the tolerant attitude of the Turks toward the Protestants in occupied territories. Thus Nikola Crnković observes how the Turks favoured the Calvinists; however there is not enough literature or data on the means and duration of the survival of Protestant communities in the wars of the sixteenth century, with all their turmoil, plagues and exoduses. Crnković mentions that in the regions of Bačka and Banat in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many church communities were 'scattered'.⁴⁴

Sterlemann only hints that local Hungarian Reformed communities east of the Tisa in Banat suffered greatly under the persecution of the Counter-Reformation: Debeljača, Novi Itebej, Velika Kikinda, Vršac, Vojlovica and six more, at the beginning of the eighteenth century.⁴⁵

Speaking of the state of affairs in the fortress town of Petrovaradin around 1750, von Taube comments on religious intolerance between Roman Catholics and Protestants: 'Among the population, who are almost all Germans, or at least of German origin, there are few who practise any craft... Only Catholics are allowed to build houses and live in the town, to acquire property and citizen's rights, rights completely denied in perpetuity, not only to Protestants, but even to Illyrians of the Greek Rite' (Orthodox Serbs).⁴⁶ It is probably for this reason that Protestants, little by little, settled nearby in *Petrovaradinski šanac*, with the result that it became a *varoš* (provincial town), which was long known as *Racka varoš* (after the Serbs known as *Račani* or *Rači* who also settled there). Taube says that

⁴² Vladimir Ćorović, *Istorija Srba* [History of the Serbs] (Niš: Zograf, 1999), p. 438.

⁴³ Nikola F. Pavković, 'Religijski pluralizam u Vojvodini – istorijski pregled' [Religious Pluralism in Vojvodina - a Historical Overview], *Zbornik za društvene nauke MS*, no. 104-105 (1998), p. 230.

⁴⁴ Nikola Crnković, 'Protestantizam u južnoslavenskim zemljama' [Protestantism in the Southern Slavic Lands], in Jean Boisset, *Protestantizam, kratka povijest* (Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost, 1985), p. 183.

⁴⁵ Sterlemann, *Studien zur Kirchengeschichte der Reformierten Christlichen Kirche in Jugoslawien*, p. 38.

⁴⁶ Taube, *Istorijski i geografski opis kraljevine Slavonije i vojvodstva Srema kako*, p. 219.

Racka varoš was, in 1751, raised to the status of a free royal city and later named Novi Sad.⁴⁷

The Hungarian population settled in the central portion of the Kingdom of Hungary, with the rest of the population grouped around the edges – Slovaks to the north, Ruthenians to the north-west, Romanians to the east and Serbs to the south. This generalisation is rough and misleading... The extreme south was a tangle in which there were almost as many Hungarians as Serbs and Germans. This region had once been a special Serbian Vojvodina [dukedom], which the Serbs asked to be returned to them in 1848.⁴⁸

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the Serbian population in the Kingdom of Hungary attended Protestant schools – *gymnasia* in Germany and the Kingdom of Hungary, and one of the first was Archimandrite Jovan Rajić.⁴⁹ The Lyceum in Pressburg (Bratislava) enjoyed great popularity right up until the mid-nineteenth century. Joakim Vujić, founder of the first Serbian theatre, frequently spoke of the significance of his visit to this lyceum.⁵⁰ There is also a record of correspondence from that period between Jovan Saski, rector of the Protestant school (the Evangelical Gymnasium) in Győr and Mojsije Petrović, Metropolitan of Belgrade, in 1728 and 1729. Saski approached the Metropolitan in writing, informing him that he intended to write a history of the ‘kingdom of the Serbian lands’ in Latin, and that he was seeking his assistance as he did not have the necessary historical data. Saski established this connection via Jovan Čarnović, who was a student of Metropolitan Mojsije Petrović and who went to school in Győr.⁵¹ The same Čarnović is later mentioned as the *Obersleutnant* of the *Pomoriška Krajna* in 1749 and when he died in 1759, it was recorded that he had been a *srbskog voinstva polkovnik* (a colonel of the Serbian army).

In this period, Dositej Obradović also took an interest in Protestantism and its doctrine relating to the use of the vernacular in church services. In 1784, in Leipzig, Germany, he translated a book by a Reformed preacher into Serbian and published it under the complicated title,

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 223.

⁴⁸ A.J.P. Taylor, *Habzburška monarhija* [The Hapsburg Monarchy] (Belgrade: Clio, 2001), p. 305.

⁴⁹ ‘In Komoran he entered the Latin *gymnasium*, where the teachers were monks of the Jesuit order, and spent four years there. In order to escape the Jesuits, who wanted to convert him to Catholicism, he went to the Protestant *gymnasium* in Sopron where he completed the *čelovječlestva nauke* (human sciences).’ See Jovan Skerlić, *Srpska književnost u XVIII veku* [Serbian Literature of the 18th Century] (Belgrade, 1966), p. 214.

⁵⁰ Branko Pavlica, ‘Najveći (nemački) uticaj na naš jezik’ [The Greatest (the German) Influence on our Language], *Helsinška povelja*, year IV, November 2001, pp. 34-35.

⁵¹ D. Ruvarac, ‘Korespondencija Jovana Saskog, rektora protestantske škole u Đuru...’ [The Correspondence of Jovan Saski, Rector of the Protestant School in Győr...], *Godišnjica Nikole Čupića* [Anniversary of Nikola Čupić], Book XXXV (Belgrade: Čupićeva zadužbina, 1923), p. 106.

'Instructive words of Mr Georgio Joaquim Zollikofer, preacher of the German Reformed parishes'.⁵²

In the nineteenth century, Serbs continued to receive schooling in the Kingdom of Hungary. Among others, Jovan Sterija-Popović received his education in the one-time Lutheran lyceum in Prešov (present day Slovakia), founded in 1666.

On the basis of the censuses of 1850 and 1857, we begin to get a better general picture of Protestant believers in the so-called Serbian Vojvodina at the beginning of the 1860s: in this region of the Austro-Hungarian Empire there were around 695,000 Catholics, 692,000 Orthodox, 23,000 Jews, 27,500 Unitarians, 60,000 Lutherans, and 25,600 Calvinists.

In lieu of a conclusion

In the Church and State archives of central Europe, in the Vatican archives, as well as in published literature, one can still find unknown or little-known details and material on the interesting subject of early Protestantism in the Balkan region. A systematic approach to the material and archives could significantly contribute to the illumination of this poorly-known period and help to correct the entrenched understanding of the Reformation as being a Western novelty in these parts.

Branko Bjelajac, Serbian historian and author, Director of Public Relations, Trans World Radio.

⁵² See more about this book in: Skerlić, *Srpska književnost u XVIII veku*, p. 274.

The Gospel according to Ibsen

Alec Gilmore

The Gospel

In order to keep on the right track and avoid the pitfalls of wandering into the highways and byways, and either getting lost altogether or finding only those things we wish to find, our first step must be to clarify what we mean by the Gospel.

Primarily, it is Good News, and good news for a particular section of the community – the poor, people who are burdened, in slavery and waiting for freedom or emancipation.¹ How does it come? Initially, through one person, of uncertain origin and questionable connections, close enough to the people to know what is going on and detached enough to appreciate what is happening, who consequently arouses interest in those who *hear* what he is saying and welcome it, and strong conflicting emotions in those who *see* what he is saying and feel threatened by it. His influence is limited, by time and circumstance, his reign brief, costly and (for him) unsatisfying and unrewarding, but for others it can be refreshing and liberating for generations to come.²

So what does this person do? Mostly he lives, talks and tells stories, but his stories alongside his way of life have a unique capacity to open blind eyes, to penetrate deaf ears, to enable the crippled to walk, the mentally disturbed to achieve balance and the dead to come alive. He enables people to know what they know, but don't know they know. The effect is cathartic as lives are turned inside out and people are never the same again. Those who see and believe find life. Those who walk away continue in limbo. Those who resist remain troubled. In all three groups very many struggle as they seek to discover what is happening and to work out the implications whilst the bearer of the good news is crucified.

Having put it like that it is not my purpose in any sense to suggest that Ibsen is a Christ-figure, though there are obvious similarities between the two lives. Rather, it is to explore Ibsen's life and work against the background of the Gospel, and to do that we have to begin with Ibsen, the Man.

¹ Luke 4: 18-19.

² Cf Isaiah 52: 13-53: 12.

The Man

Henrik Ibsen was born in 1828, in a small Norwegian town. Little is known of his childhood except that apparently he had a flair for painting,³ no capacity for sport and was reluctant to play with other children.⁴ He lived in a world of thought and dreams.⁵ He began to read the Bible at the age of six or seven and it became his favourite book.⁶ Religion was his favourite subject at school. In his early teens he would spend hours looking up Bible passages.⁷ He was confirmed at 15 but he never became a Christian and religion was one of the things which led to separation from his family.

He left home at 16, giving as one of his reasons his desire to avoid contact with certain attitudes which prevailed there and with which I was out of sympathy. . . (and) the unpleasantness or at least the bad feelings that might have resulted.⁸

It is not clear what the ‘attitudes’ were but one biographer⁹ suggests it was something to do with a religious revival sparked off by an overzealous Lutheran priest who was busy ‘stirring up his congregation with revivalist sermons’ and who subsequently left the State Church to set up his own Meeting House.¹⁰ Ibsen found himself unable to believe in God except in general and atheistic terms,¹¹ but what he never doubted was the existence of trolls, White Horses and various kinds of superstition. Something akin to Paul’s ‘principalities and powers’,¹² those hidden forces in life and society over which it seems we have no control.

From this point there is little reference to formal religion in his life but ‘there still remained a good deal of the Christian spirit in him’¹³ as he strove in his own way towards God, with a high sense of calling motivated

³ Edmund Gosse, *Ibsen* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1907), p. 8.

⁴ Henrick Jaeger, *Henrik Ibsen: a Critical Biography*, 1972, pp. 27-8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 32. Cf Jaeger, *ibid.*, p. 62 ‘at a Ball’.

⁶ Michael Meyer, *Ibsen: The Making of a Dramatist, 1828-1864* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1967), p. 31.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁸ Halvdan Koht, *Life of Ibsen*, tr and edited by Einar Haugen and A E Santaniello (New York: Benjamin Bloom, 1910), pp. 52-3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p 53.

¹⁰ Ibsen’s mother, sister and three younger brothers were the first to join, presumably to protect themselves and put their trust in a stern God who would be their saviour. (Hans Heiberg, *Ibsen. A Portrait of the Artist* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), p. 48).

¹¹ Meyer, *Ibsen: The Making of a Dramatist, 1828-1864*, p. 56.

¹² Romans 8: 38.

¹³ Koht, *Life of Ibsen*, p. 53. See also Edvard Beyer, *Ibsen: the Man and his Work*. Trans by Marie Wills (London: Souvenir Press, A Condor Book, 1978), pp. 51-63.

by the stern Jehovah of the Old Testament and a Herculean determination to restore mankind.

This paper seeks to identify and locate that Christian spirit in Ibsen and to explore how his plays can help us to appreciate it in relation to our own society on the one hand and to the Christian gospel on the other.

I began by clarifying the ‘gospel’. Clarifying ‘the Christian spirit’ is more difficult, so at the risk of over-simplification and somewhat arbitrarily perhaps, since no individual, church or independent grouping can embody the whole of the Christian spirit, I propose to focus on the two major biblical areas where that spirit manifests itself. First, in embryo, in the Old Testament, and particularly in the prophetic search for truth and freedom, without which either there could never have been a gospel or it would have been a very different one. Second, of course, in all its fullness, in the life and ministry of Jesus, who took the heart of the tradition in which he grew up, related the ideals to the reality of daily life and offered them to individuals struggling to work out the tensions thereby created, and at the same time to keep alive some message of hope for tomorrow, and the day after.

These two elements are, of course, not everything that is meant by ‘Christian spirit’ but take either of them away, or focus on one to the exclusion of the other, and the Christian spirit is either absent altogether or very different.

The Ibsen Spirit

To appreciate the Ibsen Spirit we have to begin with Brand, the principal character in one of Ibsen’s earliest works (1866) because Brand is a spokesman for much of the anger in Ibsen and a symbol of the man of pure motivation Ibsen wanted to be when he tackled the Norwegians on their conscience.

Like Kierkegaard Brand, he did not call himself a Christian, but Kierkegaard, Brand and Ibsen were all struggling for truth about Christianity and the need to sacrifice oneself for truth.¹⁴ So, for example, Ibsen made Brand a minister, a servant of God, with the line, ‘Victory of victories is losing all, the loss of all is greatest gain – what is owned for ever is what is

¹⁴ Fjelde, in the introduction to a collection of essays (Rolf Fjelde, ed., *Ibsen. A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1965), pp. 4-8), says Ibsen’s main concern was to achieve ‘a revolution of the human mind’ and ‘to seek truth artistically’, but also psychologically, historically and mythically, which expresses itself in four major areas of concern in his major plays: a personal struggle to realise himself ‘in spirit and truth’, a revolution of the human mind and the renewal of a civilisation burdened and bedevilled by ‘ghosts’ from the past.

lost',¹⁵ which is not a million miles away from the one who said 'those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it'.¹⁶

But Brand is also a development of an earlier character in a narrative poem by Ibsen and not unlike Moses and Elijah. He is a man with a mission, to whom God spoke on the mountain tops, not Sinai or Carmel but the great peaks that scraped the heavens in western Norway where Brand lived and whence he looked down on the cramped world below, knowing all the time that there was a path that led up to the heights. 'Brand is myself in my best moments',¹⁷ Ibsen once said. Brand is the personification of the early Ibsen Spirit.

Like Moses, Brand was an unlikely antagonist: Moses, ostensibly a child of Pharaoh working alongside his kith and kin, Brand, a pastor, of farming stock, with a burning desire to wage war on the world. Both were held back by personal circumstances: Moses, by his peculiar position between the establishment and the natives, and Brand, restrained by his family and the community and not least by officialdom which wanted to keep people in a state of immaturity and dependence.¹⁸ Both saw their role as delivering their contemporaries from slavery: Moses, from Egypt to the Promised Land, Brand from the social and national conventions of his time to a wholly different way of life.

Switch now from Brand to Ibsen and put Moses and the Israelites alongside Ibsen and Norway.

Norway, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, like Israel 3,000 years earlier, was a tiny nation which had virtually come from nowhere. Ceded to Sweden a century before, the Norwegians saw themselves as slaves to Sweden. Change had been coming for over fifty years, with railways, factories, coastal ferries, post and telegraph, more liberal laws and the beginnings of capitalism.¹⁹ Norway had created its own liberal constitution to safeguard its independence but could never find its freedom. And though they struggled to achieve independence and recognition on the wider stage they never wanted to be infected by it. They were slaves not only to Sweden but also to their culture and a way of life.

¹⁵ Koht, *Life of Ibsen*, pp. 192-203.

¹⁶ Matthew 16: 25.

¹⁷ Breve, 1,214, quoted in Brian W. Downs, *Six Plays by Ibsen* (Cambridge: CUP, 1950), p. 46.

¹⁸ Beyer (*Ibsen: the Man and his Work*, pp. 53-5) describes him as on the inside of government, an official to the core who had never tried his wings in flight.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-9.

This was the source of Ibsen's anger, reflected in *Brand*, and why he spent most of his life away from Norway in Italy. When he returned, like soldiers returning home after a war, or tourists after exploring foreign climes, or Jewish exiles hundreds of years later returning from Babylon, Ibsen was much more aware than most of the differences between the two worlds. He saw the limitations of those who had never set foot abroad and lived with limited horizons. He saw their slavery and set himself to tell stories to enable them to find their freedom. One by one, between 1877 and 1899, he exposed that slavery but in so doing discovered the depth and strength of the forces that held them in captivity – the trolls, the ghosts, the White Horses, however you describe them – 'the principalities and powers'.

Like many a prophet, his interventions were unwelcome and not entirely successful. After years of living in darkness, late nineteenth century Norwegians found bright lights suddenly shining in their face positively frightening.

The Trolls

So what are these trolls, ghosts, the White Horses, principalities and powers? What is this Norwegian way of life to which Ibsen takes exception?²⁰ What is it he wants people to 'see'? Answers vary but when you list them they all amount to much the same thing. MacFarlane describes them as slavery to the dead hand of convention, a compulsion to do the right thing, fear of what people will think, coupled with hypocrisy, commerce and the bigotry of institutionalised religion. In short, all the barriers to free, unfettered relationships and everything that destroys an individual's natural personality and development.²¹ Jaeger²² sums them up as morality on the lips, not in deeds. Whatever it is, it is deep rooted in the Norwegian psyche. People are blind only because they don't want to see. Only the truth will set them free. Only when free can they really live. Truth, freedom and enlightenment therefore are Ibsen's watchwords.

²⁰ Some indication of the way Ibsen was thinking can be found in 'Notes for Modern Tragedy' written in Rome, 19 September, 1878, immediately before *Doll's House*, and quoted in Heiberg, *Ibsen. A Portrait of the Artist*, pp. 203ff. See also James McFarlane, *Ibsen and Meaning. Studies, Essays and Prefaces, 1953-87* (Norwich: University of East Anglia, Norvic Press, 1989), pp. 232-50, first published as the Introduction to *The Oxford Ibsen* (Oxford University Press, 1960-77).

²¹ McFarlane, *Ibsen and Meaning. Studies, Essays and Prefaces, 1953-87*, p. 233. More specifically, G. Wilson Knight, *Ibsen* (London and Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1962, pp. 108-9) adds sexual passion, marriages of expedience, a corrupt press and vested interests.

²² Jaeger, *Henrik Ibsen*, pp. 235-8.

To put flesh on these bones we need to take a closer look at some of his plays, plots and stories, and as we do you might imagine some of the Old Testament prophets sitting at the back of the room.

For five years, in the first four plays of the classical period, Ibsen goes on the attack hammering away at structures, all guns ablaze, true to the prophetic tradition (from Moses to Malachi) in the interests of truth and righteousness, and all the emotion of a hell-fire preacher. Let us see how he does it.²³

His first attack, in *Pillars of the Community*, is on the superficial respectability and hypocrisy of people in public office.

Bernick is a highly respected ship owner and capitalist in a small Norwegian seaport whose undisclosed shady dealings and private life leave much to be desired. He sends out dodgy ships to collect insurance money, schemes to monopolise profits on a projected railway line, has an affair with an actress and leaves his brother to take the blame. Nobody knows – they all think he's wonderful.

Enter his former lover and her brother after fifteen years in the USA 'to let some fresh air' from the prairies into this stagnant society.²⁴ Fearing the worst, Bernick plans to send the brother off on one of his dodgy ships, only to discover at the last minute that his own son is going to be on the same voyage. Fortunately, the ship does not sail but Bernick sees the light and when the whole town turns out to honour this 'honourable' man with a torchlight procession, he is goaded to come clean. He publicly confesses that he is not what he seems. He has not been acting in the public interest but in his own, and he promises a new era in the life of the town, paying tribute to the women around him who have brought about his conversion when he says one of the things he has learned is that 'women are the pillars of the community', to which his former lover replies, 'Then real wisdom has eluded you . . . the spirit of freedom and the spirit of truth – these are the pillars of the community'.

²³ For the summaries that follow I am indebted to Einar Haugen, *Ibsen's Drama. Author to Audience* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota, 1979), pp. 133-47.

²⁴ For Ibsen, light is either something to flee from or something to yearn for. Dark is something that oppresses or comforts ('Ibsen and Ibsenism' in McFarlane, *Ibsen and Meaning. Studies, Essays and Prefaces, 1953-87*, p. 61, first published in *Ibsen and the Temper of Norwegian Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 52-72.)

His second attack, *A Doll's House*, is on the family home with mysogynism and the hypocrisy of the married man, male domination and female subordination, and where self-serving honour outshines love.²⁵

Torvald is high up in the bank and ostensibly a loving husband in a good marriage. What he doesn't know is when he was at death's door, in a country where women were not even allowed to incur debts, Norah, his wife, had borrowed money to save him. One day Norah has a visit from the member of Torvald's staff who had arranged the role and whose job is under threat, asking her to plead with her husband on his behalf. When she refuses he turns to blackmail, threatens to tell Torvald about the loan and reminding her that in order to acquire it she had also forged her father's signature.

Norah is anxious but confident that even if it comes to light Torvald will support her and take full responsibility, instead of which he flies into a rage and is manifestly concerned only for himself and his honour. Norah is shattered, but there is worse to come. When the blackmailer backs off, Torvald's mood changes as quickly as before, he heaves an enormous sigh of relief and all is sweetness and light.

Norah is mortified. The truth hits her between the eyes. All that ever mattered was what happened to him. She suddenly knows what it is to be a non-person – 'a doll in doll's house'. Torvald cannot believe what he is hearing. There is just nothing he would not do for her. He says,

I would gladly work for you day and night, Norah – bear sorrow and want for your sake. But no man sacrifices his honour, even for one he loves.

To which Norah replies, 'Millions of women have.'

In his third play, *Ghosts*, his concern is much more directly with the trolls, the unacknowledged power of the past to control the present – the dead

²⁵ Gail Finney ('Ibsen and Feminism' in James McFarlane, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Ibsen* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), pp. 89-105) notes that of the twelve major prose plays only one (*Enemy of the People*) portrays a healthy marriage and overall she finds four sub-topics: the double standard and marriage, the emancipated woman and motherhood (p. 90). Four other emancipated figures (Lona in *Pillars of the Community*, Petra in *Enemy of the People*, Rebecca in *Rosmersholm* and Hilde in *The Master Builder*) reject the traditional distinction of masculine and feminine, disdain public opinion and claim freedom from the hypocrisy of maintaining the *status quo*, as is demonstrated by their appearance, language and behaviour, but all are defined ultimately in terms of male characters (pp. 92-94).

Traditionally Ibsen is credited with inventing the emancipated woman with Norah (*Doll's House*) though even there A.S. Byatt ('Blaming Norah' in *The Guardian*, 2 May 2009) recently offered a dissenting view suggesting that far from being a tragic heroine she was just silly and insensitive.

hand of convention – and the consequences of living in a society where the sins of the fathers are visited on the children.²⁶

Captain Alving has just died and his widow is planning an orphanage as a memorial. Oswald (the son) has returned home after a questionable life style among the artists of Paris and wants to marry the maid, Regina, the daughter of Engstrand, a carpenter working on the orphanage who has his own scheme for a sailors' hostel. Mrs Alving is opposed to the marriage. Pastor Manders, the epitome of convention and respectability, visits to try to persuade her to allow the marriage, only to discover that Regina is in fact not Engstrand's daughter at all but Alving's daughter by a former maid. Manders then goes for her for reading free-thinking books and chides her with questioning her religion. She retaliates by reminding him that when she discovered her husband was dissolute and went to him for help he did not want to know.

At that point, Oswald and Regina (who do not know that they are brother and sister) are heard flirting in the dining room and Mrs Alving hears the ghosts – the same sounds years before between her husband and the former maid as history repeats itself.

The end is tragedy all round. Fire destroys the orphanage, Engstrand blackmails Manders into supporting his sailors' hostel, Regina rejects Oswald to live with Engstrand, Oswald (suffering from venereal disease) hands his mother a phial of morphine to administer to him when he can no longer take it himself, and Mrs Alving is left hovering over the dreadful choice she has to make as 'the past haunts the present through dead ideas that live on past their time'.

By this time Ibsen was hardly the flavour of the month, but undaunted he discards the brakes and steps on the gas. Somebody of integrity had to stand his ground in a society so bare and paltry. So he creates Thomas Stockman, in *Enemy of the People*, in a situation by no means extreme and not all that uncommon.

Stockman is the local doctor in charge of public baths in a small Norwegian seaport. Like Ibsen, he believes in personal integrity whatever the price. His brother, Peter, on the other hand, who is the local mayor and Chairman of the Baths Board, believes issues are never all black and white and there are times when you have to compromise.

When Thomas discovers that the water in the baths is contaminated he closes them until the source is identified and the press and most of the

²⁶ Ezekiel 18: 20.

public are with him. Then economic factors kick in. A new commercial development just up the road is reported to be pumping out effluent. Brother Peter takes a different view. Science and health versus the economy and jobs. Press and people quickly switch sides. Thomas issues a statement. The press refuse to print it. He calls a public meeting. Peter hijacks it.

Thomas charges them with cowardice, declares that 'the minority is always right' and says what most people call 'truths' are short-lived and quickly turn into 'lies', but Thomas is rejected as 'an enemy of the people'. They stone his house and his children are threatened at school. Determined to battle it out he sticks at his post, plans to start a school to bring disadvantaged children up in the spirit of truth and freedom, and the play ends with the assertion that 'the strongest man in the world is the man who can stand alone'.

After four plays with a stern God and an angry, defiant Moses shouting from the mountain top and refusing to be silenced or distracted, we have a change of mood. Ibsen is feeling the strain. Moses is superseded by Elijah, and not a Moses-type-Elijah, doing battle with the prophets of Baal, but a chastened Elijah, sitting under his juniper tree, licking his wounds knowing Jezebel is waiting in the wings. *Enemy of the People* may have ended with the assertion that 'the strongest man in the world is the man who stands alone', but Ibsen knew only too well that defiance of 'the compact majority'²⁷ comes at a price and it hurts. Retreating to the mountains Ibsen next wrestles with *The Wild Duck*.

The Wild Duck has two principal characters, Gregers and Ekdal, old friends from two quite different strata of society who suddenly find each after years of separation.

Ekdal is a contented dreamer. He lives in relative poverty with a capable wife, a fourteen-year-old daughter, who has a damaged pet duck which she keeps in the loft. Gregers is an idealist, who returns home after a long absence to take over the family business and finds his old friend, Ekdal.

In conversation with his father, Gregers discovers how shabbily his father treated his late mother, that Ekdal's wife (Gina) was a former maid to the family, and in all probability his father's mistress, and that his father was responsible for ruining Ekdal's father in engineering deals and

²⁷ The phrase comes from Roland Huntford, *Two Planks and a Passion: the Dramatic History of Skiing* (London and New York: Continuum, 2008), and quoted in *The Guardian*, 27 December 2008, p. 11.

therefore for the poverty in which Ekdal and his family are living. Sins of the fathers, yet again.

On the strength of this Gregers rejects the family business and goes to live with the Ekdals, whom he sees as living in a world of lies and subterfuge, propped up by the local doctor in what Gregers regards as their 'life-lie', defined by one writer as 'the self-delusion that buoys up hope'.²⁸ Gregers (a bit like Ibsen) senses a mission to deliver them from their damaged world, into the real world with the light of truth. Slaves must be given their freedom.

The wild duck is a symbol of a damaged family in a wounded society, precious only to 'an immature, if not equally wounded, child because the duck is all she has'.²⁹ Real life will only begin when the duck is dead.

Never doubting that once Ekdal sees the truth he will welcome it, Gregers persuades the young girl to shoot it, instead of which she shoots herself and the whole thing ends in tragedy, leaving the doctor to make the point that people like Gregers 'should stop canvassing their ideals around everybody's door'.³⁰

The Wild Duck was a problem for Ibsen's audiences.³¹ Up till then they may not like him but they knew where he stood. Black was black, white was white. Truth positive, the lie negative. Now he suddenly seems

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Accidentally injured by Gregers' father and unable to quack or get back to its nest it had been rescued by his father's hunting dog and given to Ekdal. Once domesticated it lost its true character and became 'acclimatised in its unfamiliar surroundings', and to Ibsen acclimatisation is synonymous with degeneration (Downs, *Six Plays by Ibsen*, pp. 148-9, 162). The idea that not only ducks but also human beings have a similar capacity to acclimatise appears again at the beginning and end of *Lady from the Sea*.

³⁰ From a summary by Haugen, *Life of Ibsen*, p. 141-2.

³¹ As early as 1888, six years before the first London performance, Havelock Ellis wrote in the Preface to the English edition that in *The Wild Duck* 'Ibsen had set himself on the side of his enemies' (quoted in Programme Notes for a performance at the National Theatre, London, December 1979). Bjørn Hemmer (Professor Emeritus in the University of Oslo) confirms Ellis's judgement in programme notes for a performance at the Donmar Theatre in 2006 when he says that *The Wild Duck* puzzled people because it suggested a *volte face* in Ibsen's thinking. In previous plays (notably *Ghosts* and *Enemy of the People*) he had argued forcefully that truth was 'a wholly positive concept and essential to an individual's existence' and the lie 'entirely negative'; in *The Wild Duck* he seemed to be saying the opposite with truth leading to disaster and the lie (the 'life-lie') being held up as a preferable alternative. McFarlane ('Drama and the Person' in McFarlane, *Ibsen and Meaning. Studies, Essays and Prefaces, 1953-87*, pp. 251-68) suggests that *Enemy of the People* (1882), *The Wild Duck* (1884) and *Rosmersholm* (1886) are all about truth and all are a reaction to the hurt Ibsen felt at the popular response to *Ghosts* (1881). *Enemy of the People* reflects his incredulity that anyone could be abused as was Stockman for what he had brought to light. *The Wild Duck* redresses the balance by raising questions about the alternatives. *Rosmersholm* faces the consequences of an excessive preoccupation with truth as if to offer a more positive assessment of the situation, demonstrating how in *Enemy of the People* truth is provable and demonstrable, almost like a chemical formula, whereas in *Rosmersholm* truth is equivocal in which things are only as they seem or as they can be made to seem and little more than what one believes at a particular time.

to be unsure as the truth that brings salvation in *Pillars of the Community* seems only to bring destruction in *The Wild Duck*.³² ‘Truth leads only to disaster’. The self-delusion that buoys up hope seems ‘a preferable alternative’, and ‘If you take the life-lie from an ordinary man’, says the Doctor, ‘then you take away his happiness as well’.³³

Ibsen suddenly seems to see the dangers of bringing people out of darkness into light. Perhaps people need their illusions. Maybe some even need falsehood. Is he beginning to wonder whether he may be wrong.³⁴ After a defiant Moses and a chastened Elijah do we now have a disillusioned Ezekiel looking out on a valley of dry bones.³⁵

Ezekiel seems to have overcome his despair by a miracle as life suddenly and unexpectedly rattled out of death, though whether it was all as simple for Ezekiel then as it reads now to us is questionable. What seems more likely is that he went away in despair and only realised later what he had sensed but not fully appreciated in the valley. Something similar seems to have happened to Ibsen. Once you have sat in that valley things look different.

With the temple razed to the ground Ibsen moves from society and political structures to the more personal problems of the human psyche, from tradition and starry-eyed idealism to the closeness of a human relationship. The trolls are still there preventing us from living our lives to the full, from realising our true selves, finding fulfilment, and achieving what we have in us to achieve, but they are not the whole story.

The Wild Duck was a watershed. The end of Malachi. The beginning of Matthew. This is where Ibsen seems to move from the Prophet to the Master, from the prophetic voice and vision of the Old Testament to a man with a message no less firm and threatening but told in a different way, still raising crucial questions about our humanity but in a more personal context, with a potential for greater openness, inclusiveness, freedom and choice.

The question for Ibsen, as indeed for early Christianity cradled as it was in 2000 years of Judaism, is what happens when two cultures collide like tectonic plates in a world where the pursuit of ideals comes up against years of crusted dogma. Is the ‘life-lie’ to be given free rein to roll on like a juggernaut, destroying everything in its wake? Or are the idealists to be

³² McFarlane, *Ibsen and Meaning. Studies, Essays and Prefaces*, 1953-87, p. 61.

³³ Bjorn Hemmer, quoted in Donmar Programme Notes, 2006.

³⁴ Jaeger, *Henrik Ibsen: a Critical Biography*, pp. 254-6.

³⁵ Ezekiel 37.

allowed to scatter land mines on every highway, reeking destruction with one explosion after another?

Ibsen's next two plays, *Rosmersholm* and *Lady from the Sea*, address that issue but now in the context of a loving (or pseudo-loving) relationship and possibly come closer to the gospel as we understand it.

Idealism is still there but is now something you have to search for rather than 'a given'. No longer that external God laying down the law and beating people into submission but an idealism born of tension between where we like to think we are or feel we ought to be and where we really are. With two plays we have two answers, leaving us with the question as to which is nearer to the gospel as we understand it or would like it to be.

In *Rosmersholm* we have Johannes Rosmersholm and Rebecca West. Rebecca is a lively, free and open woman who has come from the north into *Rosmersholm*, a totally different kind of society on the west coast where all the old traditions (the trolls) still hold sway.

Rosmer, a typical Norwegian aristocrat, has adopted a more liberal position but in the change has lost the will actually to *do* anything. Rebecca, on the other hand, is emancipated, hot-blooded, ruthless, lacking nought in will but poor in discretion. She came to care for Rosmer's wife, to whom he was unhappily married, and as governess to his two daughters.

So with Rosmer's traditional ideals, partially reformed, and Rebecca's impulsiveness, now somewhat restrained in her new environment, you might have expected things to work and, to a point, they did as the two of them developed a good, working, platonic relationship.

Tradition, ('the life-lie') and change (the truth) support each other, feed on each other and influence each other. Rosmer comes to share Rebecca's enthusiasms. Rebecca is softened and steered by his refining influence. But neither can really change, so you are left with two diverse life principles, each one-sided and inadequate.

Together, in a way, they represent Ibsen's ideal, now very different from Brand – not that stern God of thunder and lightning, but a single human being with a liberated mind and a purified will.

But can it work? The play ends with a traumatic scene where Rosmer offers Rebecca marriage and she refuses. Why? Because though she has learned the value of the old Rosmer way of life she rejects it because she sees it as death to any joy or happiness in life. She then changes her mind and he withdraws the offer. Why? Because he is not convinced that her way of life can ever make the ultimate sacrifice that he is looking for. So, unable to become one and recognising that neither can survive without the other,

far from each emancipating the other the play ends with traditional ideals and a happy carefree life dying hand in hand in the mill stream as they take their own lives together.³⁶

Rosmersholm leaves us very much where the prophets of the return found themselves in post-exilic Judaism, with tension between those who had stayed behind, kept the ship afloat, held on to the traditions, and those who come from another world with a new wave of enthusiasm to blow it all away, clean everything up and start again, yet with precious little understanding of what it was all about, and apparently totally indifferent to the consequences. It is easy to say that each group needs the other but can the new day ever dawn unless both are prepared to die? And what then? In the case of the Jews the only answer seemed to be to move from the prophets to eschatology, looking for and waiting for a Messiah whom Simeon, waiting 'for the consolation of Israel', seems to think he has found with the coming of Jesus.³⁷

Eschatology, however, is not Ibsen's line, or if it is he is not quite ready for it, so two years later he returns to the theme with *Lady from the Sea* and here I suggest we begin to see signs of new birth.

We still have the clash of two worlds and two cultures. Ellida, also a second wife, is isolated in her marriage to a local doctor. Like Rebecca, she comes from another world, powerfully and almost mystically attracted to the open sea, and horribly confined by the small world in a narrow fjord where they live. Her heart is fixed on a young sailor to whom she was betrothed, now presumed to be drowned. Whether the sailor ever existed or whether he is a symbol of a way of life, with its freedom, openness, winds and waves which she once knew and loved so much, and which now clashes so terribly with the tedious monotony of being the wife of an uninteresting doctor in this isolated fjord is unclear, but I take it to be the latter.

Things come to a head when her sailor turns up out of the blue to claim her, though it is still unclear whether his presence is reality or we are intended to see him as voices in her head or twinges in her heart. It is, after all, only a story. Her husband threatens him and tells him to go away but is well aware that he has no answer to his wife's fascination with her 'other

³⁶ Jaeger, *Henrik Ibsen: a Critical Biography*, pp. 259-65. Another view is that both are 'heartbroken romantics, not moralising idealists, who cannot bear the world that bourgeois democracy has produced' (Michael Billington, *Guardian Review*, 23 May 2008), which according to McFarlane (*Ibsen and Meaning. Studies, Essays and Prefaces*, 1953-87, p. 251) is a reflection of the revulsion Ibsen felt when he returned to Norway after an absence of eleven years and left after a month, unable to cope with the cruel fanaticism and extreme right wing attitudes with only minor changes in society here and there.

³⁷ Luke 2: 25.

life' symbolised by this Stranger (as he is called). She is torn between the old life of openness and freedom and the restrictions imposed on her by that dreadfully narrow, restricting fjord. Time to make her choice between the two. The Stranger gives her twenty-four hours to make up her mind.

When he returns the conversation is brief but tense. To Ellida the Stranger is her shadow (or *alter ego*) from which she cannot escape. The Stranger knows that too. Ellida's husband has no understanding of it. The Stranger knows that in the end she will choose him. Her husband intervenes. She 'has no choice . . . I choose for her. I protect her'.

Ellida tries to explain:

'You can keep me here – you have the means to do it, and the power. You want to do that. But my mind – what I think – what I long for – die for – you cannot chain them up. They will break free out into the unknown, for that's what I was made to do. And that's what you have shut me away from.'

Slowly the penny is beginning to drop.

'I see', he says, 'you're slipping away. You need what's infinite, beyond reach. You want what cannot be got, and that will beat you – your mind will fall into the blackness of night. So the deal we made is done – over. Choose your path. You're free. Absolutely free . . . I can let it happen because I love you.'

When the Stranger returns next day she quickly sends him on his way. Still her husband doesn't understand. 'Where did this great change come from?' he asks. It came, she says, once she was free to choose.

But then comes a line of dubious interpretation. In one translation the Stranger's parting shot is 'Now you are no more to me than a dead ship'. In another it reads, 'Now you are nothing, a ship lost in the sea of my past nothing'. The omission of the words 'to me' opens up a new way of thinking. In the first statement the Stranger is making a statement about himself and how he feels about her. In the second he seems to be making a statement about her. Ellida has chosen her new life but only at the expense of her old life which she has chosen to surrender. New life is only possible where old life is allowed to wither away. New life is born in a grave.

One commentator says Ibsen's plays have no beginnings. You start with something inherited. The crucial event has always happened before the play begins³⁸ and all we can do is look at it and reflect on it. You could

³⁸ Jaeger, *Henrik Ibsen: a Critical Biography*, p. 268.

also say there are no endings. The curtain may come down. *We* have to write the next act.

The questions linger long. What happens to the lost ship? What will happen to the new ship? Will Ellida never be the same Ellida again? The popular interpretation of *Lady from the Sea* is that the struggle ends in victory for freedom and victory for women, but others who see it as defeat as Ellida fails to free herself from a Philistine, loveless environment.³⁹ And can she really change to her new way of life, or will the old Ellida always be there? Will she pop up in expected situations and resume her old life? And if she doesn't will not a huge part of the true Ellida have been destroyed? Will the real Ellida now please stand up?

Conclusion

Those who want a simple gospel with a simple solution to all our ills, personal and political, will find Ibsen very unsatisfactory. Those who are prepared to look at the gospel and the history of Christianity more closely may begin to feel that Ibsen opens up a huge debate that many believers would prefer not to have. It is a debate to which the New Testament has no answer though if you were to talk to Paul at the end of his life I think you may find him saying, 'Man, this is just where I am'. I think he would have understood the choice Ellida had to make and what it cost and if Ellida knew her New Testament she might well have appreciated what Paul went through and found him comforting, but that is a subject for another paper.

The Revd Alec Gilmore has worked as a pastor and in theological education. He is currently, among other things, Archivist and Lecturer at IBTS.

³⁹ Wilhelm Hans and Henrick Ibsen, *Ibsen's Selbstporträt in seinen Dramen*, 1911, p 173, quoted in Downs, op. cit., p 178n.

How should we understand Alcohol Abuse and Alcohol Dependence?

Joyce A. De Ridder

Introduction

Many times we are called on as believers to minister to people because of the needs around us and not because we have special training or experience related to their specific needs. We may ignore that call for help or we may ask God for wisdom and rely on His help and that which He sends through others as we do what we can.

When faced with a problem that is not clearly understood, each of us tends to make some kind of assumption about the cause of the problem. The assumption one makes has consequences both for what we do in relating to people with this problem and also what we think the person with the problem should do. For example:

<i>If one thinks the problem is caused by</i>	<i>Then one will turn for help to</i>
A biochemical disorder	the medical profession
A psychological disorder	professional counsellors
Undisciplined living	oneself
Personal sin	oneself, God and the church
Spiritual warfare	God

One of the difficulties for most of us is that when we lack sufficient knowledge about something, we tend to think too simplistically about its cause.

In 2005 a Slovak nonprofit organisation, Zivot bez Zavislosti, was created for the purpose of helping to break the cycle of addiction in families. The name of the organisation when translated into English is 'Life without Addiction'. Part of the activity of that organisation is to produce material and conduct training that can be used by churches to address the problem of addiction to alcohol and other substances among those in the congregation and the community.¹ An essential educational beginning for individuals and church ministry teams is a clear understanding of the complexity of alcoholism.

¹ Materials produced for church use can be obtained in English in electronic form by contacting joyce_deridder@hotmail.com, or in Slovak by contacting www.zivotbezzavislosti.sk. These include a manual for training church teams for prevention and recovery ministries, a workbook for families, and material for working with children and youth.

A complex equation

Put in the form of an addiction equation, we can look at each of five components that are part of the complex problem of alcoholism. One of the foremost authorities in the USA, Terence Gorski, discusses addiction as a bio-psycho-social problem.² He includes the spiritual under his discussion of the psychological component. However, we prefer to treat the spiritual as a fourth element and address it as such.

Put in the form of an equation, it might look like this:

$$\text{Alcoholism} = \text{alcohol} + \text{physical} + \text{psychological} + \text{social} + \text{spiritual}$$

What is missing in the equation is the weight of each of the component parts, which varies from person to person. In fact, it is the weight of these various elements that makes the difference in the emergence of alcoholism, a treatable illness that can be arrested but not cured or reversed.

Alcohol

Alcoholic drinks – beer, wine, and distilled liquor – have been used for centuries and have been used for ritual, social and medicinal purposes. The continuum of alcohol consumption extends from no use at one extreme to addiction at the other, with responsible or appropriate use and misuse and abuse along the line in between. Although the Bible does not teach abstinence, and does give examples of responsible use, drunkenness is condemned as a sin.³ Perhaps that is the reason that some people look at alcoholism as a singular dimension problem, a problem of sin, and close their minds to a deeper understanding of addiction. The other ‘easy’ explanation is simply ‘lack of will power’.

Understanding a problem as complex does not mean watering down any part of it or diminishing the significance of any element. It, in fact, helps us to understand more clearly the component parts as we see them in relation to one another.

The physiological component

Accepting and understanding that there is a physiological component to alcohol dependence is especially crucial to recovery. There are two aspects to the physiological component that are especially important to understand.

² Cynthia Downing, *TRIAD The Evolution of Treatment for Chemical Dependency* (Independence, MO: Herald House/Independence Press, 1989).

³ Proverbs 23:29-35.

First, we know from a large body of research that alcoholism tends to run in families and that the problem is not entirely an environmental problem. There is a physical predisposition to alcoholism in some people because of their biochemistry. In addition, those who abuse alcohol for a long time may acquire a problem through altering their own biochemistry. The literature that supports this is credible and extensive and should not be quickly dismissed or minimised.

The fact that there may be a physiological predisposition is not an excuse for addiction. An awareness that one may have the potential for a physiological predisposition because of a family history of alcohol dependence should play a part in the responsible decisions a person makes about drinking and/or about monitoring their drinking. It should also be a part of the education we provide to children who have this risk factor to consider. We should share this information in the same way we talk about a family history of cancer, diabetes or heart problems.

As of 2007, three oral medications have been approved in the USA to help deal with the physical component of alcoholism. Like other chronic diseases, such as diabetes, high blood pressure and asthma, there are varying degrees of success in treatment. Although each helps in some way, none of them is the answer to the problem. The medical profession realises that addiction is much more than physiological.

Secondly, while many people are familiar with the acute withdrawal symptoms of alcohol dependence and the detoxification that generally can be completed within a week or so, few are familiar with post acute withdrawal symptoms that may be present in an abstaining alcoholic for several years.⁴ Without the ability to recognise these symptoms and the knowledge of how to deal with them, both the abstaining alcoholic and those around him may unwittingly contribute to a relapse.

The following post acute withdrawal symptoms occur initially because of the physical damage done to the central nervous system of the person who has been alcohol dependent. Managing post acute withdrawal symptoms requires managing stress. Any or all of the symptoms may be experienced in varying degrees of intensity by an abstaining individual. Even after they are in remission, they may be reactivated by stress and a triggering event such as a family or job problem, health issues, or any other of many individual concerns.

⁴ For an excellent discussion of post acute withdrawal symptoms and how to manage them see Terence T. Gorski and Merlene Miller, *Staying Sober A guide for Relapse Prevention* (Independence, MO: Herald House/Independence Press, 1986.)

Briefly, these symptoms include 1) the inability to think clearly, common symptoms being the inability to concentrate and impairment of abstract reasoning; 2) memory problems, particularly short-term memory; 3) emotional overreaction or numbness, which may alternate as the overreaction puts more stress on the nervous system than it can handle and there is an emotional shutdown; 4) sleep problems, often experienced as disturbing dreams, difficulty in falling asleep and/or staying asleep; 5) physical coordination problems with common symptoms of dizziness, balance problems, slowed reflexes and hand/eye coordination; 6) stress sensitivity. This last symptom is often reported as the most confusing and irritating part of post acute withdrawal. Not only do recovering people find it difficult to distinguish between low-stress situations and high-stress situations, but also this symptom intensifies the other symptoms.

With a lack of understanding of these symptoms and how to manage them, it is more likely that a relapse may occur. To ignore or deny the physiological component in alcohol dependence results in our inability to help many alcohol dependent individuals and their families. Without understanding and accepting the physical reality of addiction, we cannot minister to the whole person.

The psychological component

While the physical aspect of alcoholism may be treated and a person may abstain from drinking, individuals do not recover without a change in their thinking and behaviour patterns. By the time a significant other in the life of the alcoholic, i.e., the alcoholic's spouse or parent recognises that the drinking is not normal, the denial system is in the process of becoming established.

Although denial may look like deliberate lying in the face of obvious evidence, it is more complex and devious than an outright lie. It is a system of defence that an alcoholic has constructed to deal with the pain and the negative consequences of addiction.

It is often said that the first symptom of addiction is denial that one has a problem. The core belief of the alcoholic is that he or she 'can control' the drinking. Recovery cannot begin until there is acceptance of loss of control. The alcoholic must abstain from drinking. Recovery means change. It is a developmental process and not an event. As Brown and Lewis⁵ point out, much of the process is evolutionary. Change is incremental and layered. It builds on itself.

⁵ Stephanie Brown and Virginia Lewis, *The Alcoholic Family in Recovery A Developmental Model* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 1999).

Both the chemically dependent person and the family need to understand addictive disease as a chronic problem that needs life-long attention and lifestyle change. Gorski and Miller⁶ discuss the kinds of changes that become the focus in various stages of recovery. In the stabilisation period of one's abstinence a person regains control of thinking, emotions, judgment and behaviour. In early recovery the abstinent person experiences a major belief change and begins to develop a sobriety-centered value system rather than an addiction-based value system. In the middle stages of recovery, one works to repair damage caused by his or her addiction. In later recovery, as one maintains sobriety, one's focus is on growth and development.

The change that takes place in recovery cannot be accomplished alone. There is a saying in Alcoholics Anonymous, 'You alone can do it, but you cannot do it alone'. No one can recover for the alcoholic; it is a choice the alcoholic alone can make. However, help and support from others is essential to recovery.

One area of focus in the training manual for church ministry teams that we have developed is on the creation of support groups. The training manual, that is available electronically, and the workbook, 'Addiction and the Family', are useful tools for those who wish to begin support group ministries.

In *How People Grow*, Cloud and Townsend⁷ provide a theological framework and a biblical approach to personal growth that enhances an understanding of the role of support groups in dealing with relational and emotional issues.

The social component

The family is the primary social unit of the individual. Unfortunately, while one person becomes more and more obsessed with drinking, those closest to the alcoholic become more and more focused on the alcoholic and controlling his or her drinking. Like the alcoholic, the family members develop their own denial system and defence mechanisms to protect them from the pain related to the alcoholism. As a social unit, an interactive system, the family becomes increasingly dysfunctional.

Obviously, all dysfunctional families are not alcoholic families, but all families that include an alcohol dependent person are dysfunctional to

⁶ Terence T. Gorski and Merelene Miller, *Staying Sober Recovery Education Modules* (Independence, MO: Herald House/Independence Press, 1989), pp. 288-289.

⁷ Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *How People Grow* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001).

some extent. The unhealthy thinking and dysfunctional behaviour within the family grow as the alcohol problem becomes more severe.

Dysfunctional alcoholic families do not become healthy families simply by the abstinence of the drinker. Nor do they become healthy by the recovery of only the drinker. A family system becomes healthier as the whole family works on recovery. What is more, the family cannot do this in isolation. They need a helping community.

Most adults in dysfunctional families were themselves children in dysfunctional families. Dysfunction tends to flow from one generation to the next. It is taught by modelling and learned from experience. When one looks beyond the physical component of the problem of alcoholism, it is important to understand addiction as a family illness and the need for everyone in the family to begin the process of recovery.

Three unwritten family rules, often initially learned in one's family of origin, become predominant, isolating, self-protective rules that alienate family members from one another and from any larger community. Don't trust. Don't talk. Don't feel. In a withdrawn and isolated dysfunctional state, neither the alcoholic nor the family can become healthy without outside help.

The spiritual component

Recovery is nonexistent without change. The change that is required is a spiritual, relational, transformational process. It begins with an acknowledgement of one's own inadequacy to save oneself and the admission of the need for help. It continues with a decision to seek help from God and others and surrender to it.

While our⁸ purpose in being in Slovakia was to minister to those who were addicted and to their families, we found that the church was not prepared to undertake ministry to those trapped in addictions. Time was needed to educate churches and to respond with materials and training to those who wanted to enter such ministries.

So, we began by using the Twelve Step programme, developed by Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) in the 1930s and founded on biblical principles.⁹ It has been one of the most well known spiritual, relational recovery programmes in the world. It is practised in many countries

⁸ Joyce A De Ridder and Joe Ann Shelton began their ministry in 1997 in the city of Banska Bystrica, Slovakia.

⁹ For an in depth discussion of A.A.'s roots in the Bible see Dick B, *The Good Book and the Big Book* (Kihei, HI: Paradise Research Publications, Inc., 1997).

worldwide¹⁰ and ninety-five per cent of all substance abuse treatment programmes in the USA are based on the Twelve Step programme. While there has been much criticism of the programme by Christians because of the way in which it can accommodate people of all faiths or no faith, the programme offers the kind of support that makes it possible for people to recover who want to recover.

A Twelve Step recovery programme is also practised by family members in Al-Anon Family Groups. Other than the physiological element in addiction, when one considers recovery, the process is the same for both the alcohol dependent person and the members of the family unit. What these programmes offer individuals is a safe environment in which people who share a common problem can be open and honest with one another, where they share experience, strength and hope, and where the developmental process of recovery is encouraged.

During our twelve years of ministry in Slovakia, we utilised the A.A. Twelve Step programme for alcoholics, for family members and our own version for children for several reasons. First, because of the history and acceptance of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon Family Groups around the world and its successful inclusion in treatment programmes, we were able to introduce the Twelve Step programme into secular treatment settings in Slovakia. Participation was voluntary and the treatment staff encouraged patients to learn about the programme. Both staff and patients came to see the value of A.A. as an important part of aftercare for those leaving treatment.

Secondly, because there was already a registered Alcoholics Anonymous organisation in Slovakia, we were able to join them in helping to establish additional groups. Baptist churches in five cities in Slovakia opened their doors to provide meeting space for newly formed A.A. and/or Al-Anon groups. By their willingness to provide a meeting place for the groups, a church signalled to the recovering community and to its own congregation the church's recognition of the problem of alcoholism and a willingness to do something to lend support to those wanting and needing help.

Thirdly, because A.A. and Al-Anon are nonsectarian and clearly state that they are not affiliated with any religious body, there was no resistance from the Catholic Church or other Protestant denominations to the location of the meetings in Baptist church buildings. They did not discourage participation of their church members in these support groups.

¹⁰ Links to A.A. organisations in 59 countries can be found on www.aa.org. Under the heading 'How to find A.A. meetings' you will find a place to connect to International General Service Offices where these links are provided.

Although we are aware of several specifically designed Christian recovery programmes, by using the Twelve Step programme of A.A. and Al-Anon Family Groups, Zivot bez Zavislosti has been able to establish itself and extend its ministry within a cooperative environment to churches of all denominations, to professionals, and to the recovering community. The Twelve Step programme has been a bridge between groups and has helped to establish the credibility and acceptance of the work of Zivot bez Zavislosti within Slovakia. It has also helped local communities accept the local church as a partner in addressing the problem of addiction. Also, it has helped many embrace recovery as a spiritual, relational process.

Is understanding all we need to minister effectively?

While the focus of this article has been on viewing alcoholism as a complex, multi-dimensional problem, this understanding is only part of what is needed in order to minister to the alcohol dependent person and his or her family.

During our years in Slovakia and our active participation in Baptist churches, we found that what was and is true of most churches in America was and is also true in Slovakia. As a pastor recently said to us, 'Our church members are not comfortable with their humanity. They will not admit to others in the body of believers that they have certain kinds of problems in their lives.'¹¹

The unwritten family rules – don't trust, don't talk, don't feel – are operative in the broader family of God. Often Bible study and prayer are recommended to people as a means of dealing with a multitude of problems, while no provision is made in the church for intervention and support by members of the local body of believers. Cloud and Townsend state, 'Biblical growth is designed to include other people as God's instruments. To be truly biblical as well as truly effective, the growth process must include the Body of Christ.'¹²

They list the following roles that the Body plays in the growth process: 1) the connection of people in relationships; 2) the provision of discipline and structure; 3) accountability; 4) the offering of grace and forgiveness; 5) support and strengthening.

To address alcohol abuse and dependency and its impact on families in our churches and communities, we need both education concerning the specific problem of chemical dependency and also additional help in

¹¹ Personal interview with a Slovak Baptist Pastor in 2009.

¹² Cloud and Townsend, *How People Grow*, p. 122.

preparing the Body of Christ to take part in the healing and recovery process. We believe that, for those who are interested, there are some tools that enable us to begin.

Dr Joyce A. De Ridder, is a sociologist, a drug and alcohol educator and rehabilitation counsellor. She and Joe Ann Shelton have worked with the Baptist Union and other churches in Slovakia on these issues as well as working with and teaching in secular treatment centres from 1997 until 2008. She lectures on these topics at IBTS each year.

Book Reviews

Timothy D. Whelan, transcriber and editor

Baptist Autographs in the John Rylands University Library of Manchester 1741-1845

Mercer University Press, Macon GA, 2009, 519 pages

ISBN9780881461442 / H780

This amazing work draws together and transcribes countless letters between Baptist worthies which are held in the John Rylands Library at the University of Manchester, United Kingdom. Timothy D Whelan and the Mercer University Press are to be congratulated on this enterprise.

These are not documents from the Northern Baptist Learning Community, nor its predecessors Northern Baptist College, Rawdon Baptist College, Horton Baptist College, Manchester Baptist College and Midland Baptist College, though their records were deposited in the Rylands Library by the Revd Principal Dr M. H. Taylor in 1980. That 'permanent loan' to the collection consists of some 4,6783 printed items and 79 manuscripts.

No, the autographs (letters) in this collection include items collected by Thomas Raffles (1788 – 1863), Congregational minister in Liverpool, and his son Thomas Stamford Raffles. The Raffles collection belonged to the Lancashire Independent College, where Raffles served as Chairman of the governing body (now Northern College, which serves the URC, Congregational Federation and Moravian Church and is with the Northern Baptist Learning Community a member of the Luther King House-based Partnership for Theological Education). The collection was subsequently purchased in 1896 by the widow of John Rylands, a wealthy Manchester industrialist, and was one of the first collections to be placed in his library, which is now the University Library. To have the Baptist-related letters in this interesting collection recorded in this way is a treasure which will be of value to those researching the lives and works of English Baptist worthies.

It is impossible to do full justice to all the gems in this volume. I choose to refer simply to people of deep interest to myself. John Fawcett, writing from Wainsgate to John Sutcliffe in Bristol in 1773 about an outbreak of small pox in Hebden Bridge. Dan Taylor (New Connexion) writing from London to John Fawcett (who had refused to baptise him over their differing views – Taylor the Arminian, Fawcett the Calvinist) at Brearley Hall in 1777: 'Beloved and esteemed brother in Christ..... your sincere and affectionate brother, Dan Taylor'. The letter referred to rumours of Taylor's disciplining of members of his congregation. William Steadman at Horton College, writing to James Dinwiddie at Pool, near

Otley in 1835 about the dire need of his sister-in-law married to an Independent Minister and seeking assistance from Dinwiddie to get one of her sons, John Isaacs into the Congregational School at Lewisham in London. Letters are here from missionaries. William Knibb writing from Falmouth, Jamaica to Liverpool enclosing a wooden ruler made from the stump of a log which had been part of the foundations of his previous chapel building destroyed by riots in 1832; the ruler to be presented as a gift to Thomas Raffles. William Steadman writing to Isaac Mann at Shipley regarding the Yorkshire Baptist Association meetings and a necessary change of date because of the Market (Bradford?) being on Thursday, so the Association must meet Tuesday and Wednesday. I confess as a successor to Steadman, I never took markets into account when planning the annual meetings! Here are matters of denominational strategy, of pastoral care and of the everyday life of preachers of the Gospel in that era. The language is engaging and the insights bring into clear perspective important people from our past.

Other letters include Carey and his interest in plants, Fuller, Ryland Jnr, Stennett, Hugh Evans, Caleb Evans, Medley of Liverpool, Langdon in Leeds, Rippon, Gill, Pearce, Ward at Serampore, Hinton, Ivimey, F. A. Cox, Kinghorn, Robert Hall and J. G. Pike of Derby to select some noteworthy names. The authors are predominantly male, but the subjects and divergencies expansive.

This is not a book to sit down with in an evening for a 'good read' with a cup of cocoa but a useful treasury for those engaged in serious historical research. Our thanks are due to Timothy Whelan for his research and for Mercer University Press in having the wisdom to publish it.

Keith G Jones
Rector, IBTS, Prague
General Secretary of the Yorkshire Baptist Association 1980-1990

Keith E. Durso

Thy Will be Done: A Biography of George W. Truett
Mercer University Press, Macon GA, 2009, 375 pages
ISBN9780881461572

Keith Durso offers us this important portrait of George W. Truett, an outstanding leader amongst Southern Baptists and the Baptist World Alliance in the early part of the last century. Durso had read the earlier biography of Truett (after whom Truett Seminary at Baylor University is

named) by his son-in-law Powhatan W. James, written in 1939. Durso informs us that he had always understood Leon McBeth was writing a biography of Truett as McBeth was a great admirer, but this did not come to pass. So Keith Durso has filled the gap with this careful and thoroughly researched public life of Truett.

Truett would be worthy of a biography in respect of his 44 years at First Baptist Dallas (FBC). He was a highly committed preacher of the Gospel expressing a wish to his congregation from a sermon in 1912 that 'to the last' he might go on preaching and witnessing. He was a man of high energy and there were common predictions that through his commitment to every aspect of ministry he would soon burn out. Yet that was not to be. In the year of his 75th birthday (1942) he preached 251 sermons, officiated at 28 funerals and 47 weddings and delivered 50 other addresses. He was away from Dallas for 153 days engaged in wider Christian activity. From a relatively small congregation the membership at FBC rose to over 7,800 in 1944, the year of his death. The style of worship at FBC was formal and solemn. Truett would write his sermon out by hand, perhaps ten or fifteen pages, but then it would be condensed into a few notes on the back of an envelope placed in his pulpit Bible, but generally unferred to during the sermon as he wanted to 'look straight into the eyes of the hearers'.

Beyond FBC, Truett was deeply engaged in wider Texas Baptist life. His adversary in that arena was J. Frank Norris, the fundamentalist. He shared in the wider concerns of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and was active in the Baptist World Alliance, a champion of religious liberty and a man who convinced the conservative FBC to support causes beyond itself rather than simply the life and work of the local congregation. All this is helpfully explored by Durso.

It seems Truett often worked behind the scenes in the affairs of the SBC, on occasions leaving his assistant, James Coleman, to make the public speeches. Truett served as a preacher to US forces in Europe in the First World War, at one point being invited to confer with US President Wilson and British 'Baptist' Prime Minister David Lloyd George (interestingly referred to by Durso as 'George', p. 157). I would have been interested to know more about his family life, his marriage to Josephine and his deeper personal friendships. Nevertheless, this is an important book about a key leader in Southern Baptist life.

Keith G Jones
Rector, IBTS, Prague